



Chester Ridgway

1942-2014

E. Chester “Chip” Ridgway III, M.D., 72, passed away Thursday, July 31, 2014, at his home in Greenwood Village, Colo., with his family by his side.

Chip was the victim, as was his sister Betsy before him, of pancreatic cancer.

Chip was born in Cody in 1942, the son of Chet and Emily Ridgway. He attended Cody High School and emerged as a great athlete, first as a freshman on the 1957 state championship basketball team and then as a junior on the 1959 state championship football team.

He also squeezed in some time on stage as a lead in “All My Sons,” and on his studies, especially and tellingly in the sciences.

During his high school summers he helped his family start Elk Creek Ranch in Sunlight Valley, a summer ranch program for teenagers. Mounted on his favorite horse, Strip, Chip rode the trails of Sunlight introducing hundreds of teenagers to Wyoming and to the ways of the West.

His post-secondary education was directed toward the dream of following his father’s work as a doctor. Chip completed a pre-med program and a philosophy major at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, and then returned west to the University of Colorado for medical school. Internship, residency, and fellowship programs followed at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

He served two years in the Navy as a medical officer in San Diego and returned to the Thyroid Unit, which he later headed, at Mass General, and to the faculty of Harvard Medical School.

He made his final return to the West and to the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 1985. Part of the reason was his own desire to be in the mountains and to be close to Cody and Sunlight. He wished the same for his children who, as he said, “were pre-teens and they were getting a little too used to being Boston people.”

At the School of Medicine, Chip was the head of the Division of Endocrinology from 1985 until 2007, and from 1994 was also Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

He served as President of the American Thyroid Association from 1996-97 and President of The Endocrine Society from 2003-04. He established and for 20 years directed a highly regarded Endocrine Fellows Conference which provided a unique educational opportunity to more than 2,000 national and international trainees in thyroidology.

He was also an active leader and frequent lecturer at international endocrine and thyroid gatherings. In 2011, Chip was named a Distinguished Professor of the University of Colorado and among his many national and international awards, he also received the first Lewis E. Braverman Lectureship Award from the American Thyroid Association.

On July 31, the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus lowered its flag to half-mast, and the Dean of the CU School of Medicine, Richard D. Krugman, MD, said of Chip, “Chip has been a pillar of the School of Medicine for nearly three decades and his commitment to education, research and public service won accolades from colleagues here, nationally and throughout the world.

“For his entire career here and in Boston he was the quintessential ‘triple threat.’ He had hundreds of patients who relied on him as their physician, he managed a research lab, a clinical lab, and he educated generations of fellows, residents and students. For the last two decades, he oversaw our academic environment as Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.”

Frank Kronenberg, MD, of Mass General stated, “He was an accomplished investigator, clinician and teacher. A free spirit in cowboy boots, he enriched every group he was part of and was a warm friend to many. His passing is a great loss to the world of endocrinology and to all his many friends in the Endocrine Division and throughout the world.”

Even with his high level of commitment to his medical profession, Chip managed to scratch out time to pursue his athletic passions. A jogger, exercise enthusiastic and tennis player, he turned later in life to bicycling and unleashed the competitive juices he was known for at Cody High School.

His crowning moment was completing the Triple By-Pass, covering more than 100 miles in the Colorado Rockies and crossing the continental divide three times at the young age of 70.

He also drove north from Denver to Cody and Sunlight more and more to return to the trails of his childhood. He purchased and was modernizing a cabin in Sunlight where he planned to spend much of his retirement, riding his new horse Bubba, a tall Missouri Fox Trotter.

Chip is survived by his children Emily and her husband Eric, Eli and his wife Carley, and Abi and her soon-to-be husband Trevor, his first grandchild Jules, and by his great friend and partner

in many travels and adventures Carla Donelson. Other surviving relatives include his brother Hap and sister-in-law Susan, his brother-in-law Cliff, his nieces and nephews Tina and husband Rob, Debbie and husband Paul, Kyle and husband Andrew, Melissa and husband Josh, Alyson and Grant, and his grand-niece Keenan and grand-nephew Sean. The younger generation especially enjoyed Chip's sense of humor and mischief and the joy he brought to our family gatherings.

The University of Colorado Medical School has two established funds which recognize Chip's professional passions and priorities: The Ridgway Scholarship to help fund the medical education of students with backgrounds underrepresented at the School and the E. Chester Ridgway MD Fellowship Endowment Fund to provide much needed support for the training of endocrinology, metabolism, and diabetes fellows at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, Division of Endocrinology, in research and patient care.

Memorial contributions may be made through the University of Colorado Foundation. Please direct your contributions to the fund of your choice in memory of E. Chester Ridgway, MD. Visit www.cufund.org or send a gift to University of Colorado Foundation, P.O. Box 17126, Denver, Colo., 80217-9155.

Chip remained a man of Cody while he also grew into a man of the world. He was as comfortable hunkering down around a campfire in the Dry Fork of Dead Indian on an elk hunting trip as he was giving a lecture on the latest thyroid research to an audience of doctors in Tokyo. In both settings and in all ways, Chip's was a great hearted life full of joy and giving.

Chip donated his body to Science Cares in Denver and will later be cremated with the ashes scattered in Sunlight. The University of Colorado School of Medicine is having a memorial service Aug. 8. The family is planning a small, private memorial next August.

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